

Latest News

April 2003

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

Verification of Continuing Education (CE) contact hours

The day when continuing education contact hours will be required for certification renewal is fast approaching. Operators holding certificates that expire in January 2004 can start renewing their certificates in July 2003. This will be the first group of operators to renew their certificates with a CE contact hour requirement. An important part of the renewal process will be verification. This is especially important in the beginning because the requirements for an acceptable contact hour may not be fully understood by all.

Verification is the process of ensuring that CE contact hours meet the requirements stated in our guidance document and the operator was present during the class. The four things we will be looking for in a CE contact hour are the following.

1. The course must be at least one hour long.
2. It must have taken place during the operators' current renewal period.
3. The subject matter must be specific to drinking water treatment or distribution, (25% of the CE requirement can be in safety topics).
4. Contact information is provided for the CE provider.

It is important to note that if we cannot verify the operators' attendance with the CE provider, the contact hour will not be accepted!

What is a "CE provider"?

A CE provider is any company, organization, or trainer who provides or arranges for a presentation that transmits information related to the operation of a treatment facility and/or distribution system.

Who is the CE provider if a water utility decides to train its own operators?

If a water utility conducts in-house training the water utility would be considered the CE provider for the training they provide.

What must a water utility do to offer CE contact hours that are verifiable?

1. Arrange for one of their own operators or an outside speaker to conduct a training class.
2. Track attendance with a sign-in / sign-out sheet during the class.
3. Archive the following information for verification purposes;

- a. Title of course
 - b. Instructor
 - c. Sign-in/sign-out sheet
 - d. Number of contact hours offered
 - e. Training material or hand-outs, (an explanation of the subject matter)
 - f. Location of training
 - g. Date of training
 - h. Contact information of CE Provider. This could be anybody in the water utility that has access to the archived file.
4. Provide the above-mentioned information to each operator who attended the training.

If my water utility sends me to a conference for training can they verify my CE hours?

No. The operators' employer or water utility cannot verify contact hours given by another agency, organization or outside training source. The actual CE provider in this case would be the organization that put on the conference, not the water utility.

How do I know if a CE provider will verify this information for me?

Since we will not be contacting the operator for verification it is important that you can be sure your contact hours will be verified. A good way to do this is to ask these questions about a course or seminar you are considering or have already taken;

- ✓ Does the CE provider offer contact hours?

An organization will usually advertise the fact that contact hours are available. This usually means the organization is familiar with the concept of continuing education contact hours and is willing to provide the required documentation.

- ✓ Does the CE provider require that you sign-in and sign-out to verify attendance?

The simplest way to verify attendance is to have an operator sign-in when the class or seminar begins and sign-out when it ends. Other means may also be acceptable but some kind of record of attendance must be kept or the CE provider will not be able to verify that you were there.

- ✓ Does the CE provider offer the attendee the information required by the Operator Certification Unit for certification renewal?

In order to claim a contact hour an operator must have the following information;

- Title – A descriptive title of the seminar or course so the subject matter can be reviewed.
- Instructor – The individual, organization, or event that provided the continuing education contact hours.
- Number of contact hours earned.

- Location.
- Date – The date(s) the contact hours were earned.
- Contact information of continuing education provider - This information is required so that attendance and subject matter can be verified. The contact should be able to verify all of the information listed above. The contact person can be the actual instructor or an individual designated by the continuing education provider to retain this information. The contact information could be in the form of a phone number or mailing address.

How does the Operator Certification Unit verify contact hours?

We use the information provided to us by the operator to contact the CE provider. The CE provider must be able to tell us what subject matter was taught, when and where the operator attended the course and how many contact hours were provided. An operator cannot verify his or her own attendance.

What will happen if I do not have enough contact hours to meet the renewal requirements?

Continuing education will be a renewal requirement starting in 2004. If you do not meet the CE contact hour requirement for your certificate it will not be renewed and your certificate will be suspended on the expiration date. To avoid possible suspension you may want to renew your certificate at the beginning of your renewal period. This will give you the maximum amount of time to make up any contact hours you need. Remember, certificate renewals are due between four and six months before your certificate expires. If you send in your renewal and find out you do not have enough acceptable hours you still have until the expiration date to get those contact hours before your certificate is suspended.

Review the Certification requirements before you apply for an exam!

Under the new regulations, it is possible to pass an exam but fail to meet certification requirements. If an operator does not possess the required experience or is unable to acquire that experience within three years of the exam, he/she will not qualify for certification.

EXAMPLE

If a D2 operator who passes the D3 exam has no experience in a D2 or higher system, the operator will not qualify for D3 certification. The operator has up to three years after the exam to meet the experience requirements. If, however, the operator is employed at a D1 system the required D2 system experience could not be obtained at the operators' current position!

Please review the experience requirements listed below before you apply for an exam, as application fees are non-refundable.

Distribution Certification Experience Requirements

D1, D2

- no experience required.

D3

- 1 year of operator experience working as a certified D2, interim D3 or higher, or temporary D3 operator for a D2 system or higher. **(no substitution)**.
- 1 additional year of operator experience working as a distribution operator (may be substituted with (A) or (B) below).

D4

- 1 year of operator experience working as a certified D3, interim D4 or higher, or temporary D4 operator, at a D3 system or higher **(no substitutions)**.
- 3 additional years of operator experience working as a distribution operator (may be partially substituted with (A) below).

D5

- 2 years of operator experience working as a certified D4, interim D5, or temporary D5 operator for a D4 or D5 system. **(no substitutions)**.
- 3 additional years of operator experience working as a distribution operator (may be partially substituted with (A) below).

Experience Substitutions for Distribution Certification, as referenced above:

- (A) A degree earned at an accredited academic institution may be substituted as follows:
 - An **Associate degree** or **certificate** in water or wastewater technology or distribution that includes at least 15 units of physical, chemical, or biological science may be used to fulfill 1 year of operator experience (section 63805(f)(1)).
 - A **Bachelors degree** in engineering or in physical, chemical, or biological sciences may be used to fulfill 1.5 years of operator experience (section 63805(f)(2)).
 - A **Masters degree** in engineering or physical, chemical, or biological sciences may be used to fulfill 2 years of operator experience (section 63805(f)(3)).
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- (B) A certified operator may substitute on a day-for-day basis the experience gained while working with lead responsibility for water quality or quantity related projects or research (section 63805(g)).

Water Treatment Certification Experience Requirements

T1, T2

- T1,T2,— No experience required.

T3

- 1 year of operator experience working as a certified T2 operator for a T2 facility or higher (may be substituted with (C) below).
- 1 additional year of operator experience working as a certified treatment operator (may be substituted with (A), (B), or (D) below).

T4

- 1 year of operator experience working as a Chief or Shift operator, while holding a valid T3 certificate, at a T3 facility or higher (may be substituted with (C) below).
- 3 additional years of operator experience working as a certified treatment operator (may be substituted with (A) or (D) below).

T5

- 2 years of operator experience working as a Chief or Shift operator, while holding a valid T4 certificate, at a T4 facility or higher (**no substitution**).
- 3 additional years of operator experience working as a certified treatment operator (may be substituted with (A) or (D) below).

Experience Substitutions for Water Treatment Certification, as referenced above:

- (A) A degree earned at an accredited academic institution may be substituted as follows:
 - An **Associate degree** or **certificate** in water or wastewater technology that includes at least 15 units of physical, chemical, or biological science may be used to fulfill 1 year of operator experience (section 63800(f)(1)).
 - A **Bachelors degree** in engineering or in physical, chemical, or biological sciences may be used to fulfill 1.5 years of operator experience (section 63800(f)(2)).
 - A **Masters degree** in engineering or in physical, chemical, or biological sciences may be used to fulfill 2 years of operator experience (section 63800(f)(3)).
- (B) A certified operator may substitute on a day-for-day basis experience gained while working with lead responsibility for water quality related projects or research (section 63800(g)).
- (C) If the applicant has a bachelor of science or a master of science degree, completion of a comprehensive operator training program pursuant to section 63800(h) may be substituted for the experience requirement.
- (D) Experience gained as a certified wastewater treatment plant operator may be used to substitute up to two years of the operator experience requirements. Each two months of experience as a waste water treatment plant operator shall be considered equivalent to one month of water treatment facility operator experience (section 63800(i)).